

*"In Order to Win Their Friendship":
Renegotiating First Contact*

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We came through marvelous timber forest and eventually ascended a gently sloping hill which appears to mark the last edge of the foothills of the Oertzen Ranges. On the flat hilltop the natives had a plantation with a small storehouse filled with yams. When I went on, I thought I heard the voices of natives and called out. After some time I received a reply, and following the sound I arrived at a new, recently fenced-in taro plantation. There stood three natives poised to throw their spears who by unequivocal gestures made it known to us that they wanted us to go away. I motioned to my people to stay behind, broke off a green branch and approached the natives. As I patted one of them on the back, and gave another a friendly slap on the tummy, they trembled with fear. When I slipped a few beads into their hands, however, they were delighted. They invited us to sit down and gave us pieces of sugarcane. I traded with them for a few taros and bananas. Apparently these people belong to the same tribe as the coast-dwellers; they understood words of their language. Very often they used the word *marik*. Initially I took that to be the name of their village. Later I found out that it means "to go away" or something like "Get lost!". As far as European products were concerned, the people had a few beads, but no iron yet, which they knew well, however. Two of the natives, who now seemed to trust us, accompanied us and guided us down to the Gogol River. (Lauterbach 1891, 49–50; my translation)

I selected this text more or less at random. Its author, the German botanist Carl Lauterbach, described an incident of first contact in late 1890 on an expedition to the upper reaches of the Gogol River in what is today Madang Province, Papua New Guinea. The expedition was sponsored by the German New Guinea Company. The company had been in the area for less than five years, and the Lauterbach expedition was one of many

somewhat tentative attempts by the Germans to “open up” the interior of northeastern New Guinea.

How do we conceptualize first encounters between Europeans and non-Europeans in our historical analyses of colonialism? Where in our discursive frameworks do we situate “first contact”? What role do we assign European written evidence when writing the history of a colonized non-European country? How much significance do we grant events such as the one depicted by Lauterbach? Is it possible to arrive at a universally valid formula for writing histories of first contact?

Historical moments of strangers stepping ashore or descending into a valley and of natives and strangers establishing first contact on the beach or in the clearing have stood at the beginning of many a Pacific Island history. Even for historians who are rejecting the distinction between the pre-history of oral cultures and the history of those touched by European writing, incidents of first contact still mark important turning points in the history of any Pacific island and of any Pacific Island people. Given the relative insularity of some Pacific Island societies and the assumed insularity of many others, Pacific Island historians must have registered hundreds, possibly thousands of such moments.¹ So much hinges, Pacific Island historians have been saying, on the initial encounters between strangers and natives. So much hinges on the course of the drama acted out on the beach or in the clearing. And for the histories Pacific Island historians write and teach, so much hinges on how this drama is constructed and interpreted.

Many histories that revolve around first contact have been written in anticipation or commemoration of the Columbus quincentenary, the five-hundredth anniversary of what in a history of European colonialism must rank as a first “first contact.” I have been wondering whether those histories can inform Pacific Island historians’ attempts at writing the moment of first contact in colonial history.

LENGTHY QUALIFICATIONS

I should clarify three points of terminology. First, when talking about the difficulties of making sense of first contact, I am talking as a European interested in encounters in the Pacific Islands, Australia, New Zealand, and the Caribbean, between Europeans and non-Europeans. When using the term *Europeans* in this article, I am also referring to North Americans,

Australians, and New Zealanders, who identify as Euroamericans, White Australians, or Pakeha. When I talk about *us*, I am trying to make generalizations about those of you who are Europeans in the above sense.

Second, I am aware that the term *first contact* is deceptive. In many cases, non-Europeans had encountered European goods and diseases long before "first contact." "The people had a few beads, but no iron yet, which they knew well, however," Lauterbach noted in his account of first contact (1891, 50). I am also aware that, in any given colonial situation, there may have been a series of first contact situations, stretching over a few centuries, with the very first one no more dramatic and of no more far-reaching consequences than the second or tenth years or generations later. The historic moment of first contact is a historical construction born of the desire to isolate a starting point of the relationship between European invaders and non-European indigenes.

Finally, I should draw attention to some general problems associated with the terminology I am using. Our histories differ according to whether we say "invasion" or "landfall" or "discovery" when talking about, say, 12 October 1492 in what may or may not have been called Guanahani by the locals, or 29 April 1770 in what later became known as Botany Bay. The terms *first contact* and *initial encounter* themselves suggest a meeting on equal terms and are thus problematic. Many of the terms I use are enclosed by quotation marks to guard you against their traps or, to use the words of first-contact historian Peter Mason, "to indicate that they involve a temporary shift onto the 'terrain of the opponent' " (Mason 1990, 5).

But you may relish the fact that all of these terms are loaded, that—with or without quotation marks—they carry their histories like unwieldy ruffs around their necks. You, the reader, may wish to ponder the layers of different meanings and the assortment of connotations that a term like *first contact* has acquired. I will sometimes be referring to natives and strangers. This terminology is more than a tribute to Greg Dening: it is a defiant attempt to reclaim a language that has been impoverished by the sanitizing efforts of writers who affix quotation marks to every word with a compromising history. The language at my disposal is the very language that has been used to facilitate colonialism. Its body has been contaminated too thoroughly to be cured by amputating its limbs or installing brand-new artificial joints. We write from within and through the language against the very relationships and processes that it represents and

that it has helped to create and maintain. I believe it is more effective to undermine colonial vocabulary by twisting and appropriating it than to pretend that it is possible to operate outside its confines. As we do not live in a *postcolonial* world (in a world that has left colonialism behind), postcolonial opposition has to adopt subversive strategies, however much it may wish to stay off the "terrain of the opponent" or to assault in open combat colonial edifices (which, to make matters worse, not infrequently turn out to be quixotian windmills).

This approach has nothing to do with promoting a particular typographical aesthetic. Rather, it acknowledges the ambiguity and inherent contradictions of colonial history. It pays tribute to the capacity of colonized people to imbue colonial vocabulary with meanings that unsettle its intended effects, long before European anticolonial experts condemn it. It takes into account the way in which the colonial project is often exposed by its own flagrant rhetoric. It reflects the colonizers' susceptibility to being caught in their own traps.²

There is good reason for not banishing such lengthy qualifications to the endnotes. I am foreshadowing my conclusion and drawing your attention to the concern that impelled me to write this article: I am arguing for a heightened sense of self-consciousness. Those writing the colonial past need an acute alertness and a lingering suspicion of their own practices. I am particularly worried about historians who maintain that they need only cite what they call historical evidence when contesting one another's readings and writings of the past.

Consider, for example, the following methodological preamble to a quincentennial rewriting of first contact in the Americas:

The difference between persuasive rhetoric and persuasive scholarly argument is the scholar's reliance on hard evidence, and the interpretation and presentation of that evidence in a balanced way. To understand the context and meaning of the Columbian voyage of 1492, we need to discard the misconceptions that have surrounded the historical figure of Columbus. This book is an effort to examine the best evidence available about Columbus and his worlds and to present it as fully, and clearly, as possible. Central to that effort is identifying the evidence and evaluating its validity. (Phillips and Phillips 1992, 8)

How innocent such practices pretend to be! And how severely these authors need to discipline their subject matter in order to isolate hard evidence (or "unadorned facts" [Fernandez-Armesto 1992a, vii]) and arrive at

balanced interpretations! As I hope to show in the following, however, empiricist historians are not the only ones who need to be more suspicious of the implications of their practices: authors whose revisions of colonial history are seemingly grounded in their own critical self-consciousness often fail to address the politics of historical representation as far as their own writings are concerned, while detecting orientalizing or colonizing textual strategies in the writings of others.

My selection of approaches to conceptualizing first contact is biased. I am interested in revisionist histories of sorts. In the following I will ignore the large body of celebratory histories that were churned out in anticipation or commemoration of the Columbus quincentenary—histories that glorify further the role Europeans played in the “discovery” and conquest of the non-European world.³ Unashamedly heroic histories and those that hide their condoning of European colonialism behind the façade of a supposedly innocent empiricism have, in fact, often provoked the texts with which I am concerned. I will first identify three different trends in writing the history of early colonial contact in the Americas. In doing so, I will categorize authors into three heterogeneous bunches. Then I will briefly reflect on the writing of first contact in Pacific Island history and, finally, discuss the approaches of two authors who have tried to rewrite first contact in Aotearoa (New Zealand) and Australia.⁴

FROM ADMIRAL COLUMBUS TO GENERAL WESTMORELAND

“In order to win their friendship, since I knew they were a people to be converted and won to our holy faith by love and friendship rather than by force, I gave some of them red caps and glass beads which they hung around their necks, also many other trifles. These things pleased them greatly and they became marvellously friendly to us” (Cohen 1967, 55). Thus Bartolomé de las Casas quotes the Admiral of the Ocean Seas about his first encounter with the islanders of Guanahani. In these words we can detect the inevitability of a future to come. Genocide, slavery, and environmental disaster follow swiftly on Columbus’s heels. The most noticeable trend in recent first-contact historiography has been a rereading of first contact as the point when disaster began. In 1992 Columbus was rarely allowed to dodge responsibility for the aftermath of first contact in the Americas. Revisionist first-contact histories of this first variety are histories written with the benefit of hindsight.

In his mildly revisionist history of Columbus and his legacy, Kirkpatrick Sale seems to suggest we had to wait five hundred years to obtain that benefit: "Only now can we see how completely the Discovery and its legacy over the last five centuries have altered the cultures of the globe and the life-processes upon which they depend. . . . After five centuries, then, we have come to a unique position from which to judge the consequences of the Columbian discovery in their fullest dimensions" (1991, 4). The past is telescoped back through the present—a present where we have become conscious of the legacies of colonialism. The landfall in Guanahani set in train a process that led to the worldwide separation of humankind into dominant and subordinate, to the underdevelopment of one part of the world and the development of the other. First contact in 1492 has been identified as the symbolic starting signal for the colonial relationship: in 1492 the European bug that from then on afflicted non-European peoples in general and Native Americans in particular was passed on.

Columbus, Hans Koning writes in his classic *Columbus: His Enterprise*, "set in motion what de las Casas called 'the beginning of the bloody trail of conquest across the Americas' " (1991, 115). Koning is not particular about genealogical details when constructing the Columbus legacy:

The Spaniards cut off the hands of the Arawaks who didn't come in with enough gold. More than four hundred years later, Brazilian entrepreneurs cut off the ears of the Indians who didn't come in with enough wild rubber. The Spaniards threw the Indian children in the sea, shouting, 'Boil in hell, children of the devil.' The United States General Westmoreland announced, "An Oriental does not prize his life as we do." He used new and improved napalm, while the Spaniards in Hispaniola used green wood for burning the Indian caciques in order to make them suffer and scream longer—as an example for the others, of course.⁵

Revisionist histories of the first variety are anticolonial histories. They are particularly attractive in settler colonies. Australia, New Zealand, and North America no longer seem in dire need of European founding fathers or first ancestors. The genealogical links of these founding fathers with particular settler societies were often spurious anyway, as in the cases of Columbus and the United States, or Cook and Australia. Revisionist histories try to debunk the foundational myths of settler colonies. Botany Bay in 1770 or Guanahani in 1492 are no longer starting points of heroic

lineages, but have become points of departure for a tragic unfolding of events.

I think there is an unacknowledged expectation that, by making a clean slate of the past, by acknowledging and emphasizing the wrongs of conquest, an understanding can be reached between the indigenous and non-indigenous people of settler colonies. These histories are confessional: what is hoped for is an absolution—possibly after the means for an appropriate atonement have been found. By the late nineteenth century, Columbus had been adopted as one of the founding fathers of the United States. Now, histories that stress the genocide in the Caribbean in the wake of Columbus' voyages seem to strive for a reconciliation between native and non-native people in the United States. The Taino of Guanahani had all fallen victim to European conquest soon after 1492, but in a sense all surviving Native Americans are descended from them.

The histories that stress the devastation of the West Indies in the wake of Columbus's landfall have been matched in the past twenty years by Australian histories highlighting the European violence that has been directed against Australian Aborigines.⁶ It appears that they respond to the expectation that, by writing down every single massacre in Australian history, the burden of the past can be eased.⁷

Earlier I pondered over the merits of rejecting a corrupted language rather than self-consciously (and with devious intent) employing it. In many revisionist texts of this first variety the urge to divest oneself of the colonial past is coupled with a desire to divest oneself of the language of colonialism.⁸ A purist attitude toward language sometimes betrays a purifying intent: history then becomes a means for protecting the present from being contaminated by the past by writing the past away.

THROUGH INDIAN EYES

The second trend is characterized by a shifting in perspective—away from that of the admiral or captain, or whichever white male explorer, toward that of the "other side." Traditionally, the writing of first contact in the Americas has relied on written primary evidence, that is, contemporary European accounts. These accounts were nearly always produced with the intention of advertising or justifying the actions of those writing them. Rereadings of these accounts provide the material for first-contact histo-

ries that emphasize Native American agency. Read against the grain, the European actors reveal how much their actions were in fact reactions to what Native Americans did. In some cases, the rewriting of first contact from what is intended to be a Native American point of view draws on myths or oral traditions collected by Europeans in which Native Americans tried to make retrospective sense of the arrival of the Europeans.

I see the emphasis on the other side of the story very much as a reaction to the growing strength of indigenous rights movements as well as a reaction to their recognition by the nonindigenous majorities in settler colonies. Indigenous voices are being listened to, and therefore European historians find it increasingly difficult to deny agency to the ancestors of today's indigenous activists. But then constructing a supposedly indigenous perspective and focusing on indigenous agency can also be very convenient for nonindigenous historians, as it diverts attention from their own genealogy and heritage. By emphasizing native resistance to colonialism in particular, nonindigenous historians may be hoping for a deal that elevates the former victims to the status of historical actors with whose descendants a deal granting equal rights to both settlers and indigenes in a shared society can be struck. Ronald Wright's book *Stolen Continents: The Americas through Indian Eyes since 1492* exemplifies the second trend, both in its attempt to tell "the other side of the story" and in its political agenda: "The people from the 'Old World' cannot go back across the sea, nor should they. And the mixed people born of both worlds can have no other home. But the intruders and their offspring can at least make room for the American peoples who remain. They can offer true equality, not annihilation disguised as "integration" or *mestizaje*, nor the fictitious liberty of citizenship in Euro-American countries where the Indian will always be outnumbered and outvoted. They can accept the right of American Indians to be free, equal, and different" (Wright 1992, 345-346).

CRITIQUING COLONIAL DISCOURSE

A recent preoccupation with European colonial discourse in relation to first contact constitutes the third trend. Whereas the first approach locates the initial encounter at the starting point of a tradition reaching to the present, the third approach identifies it as part of an ongoing tradition. Of

course these two approaches cannot be neatly separated, and usually those reaching back from 1492 still conceive of a tragic chain of events post-1492 leading to the present. In the introduction to her study of texts by Marco Polo, Mandeville, Columbus, Raleigh, and others, Mary Campbell remarks: "The specter of the American holocaust will fade into the background of this study. But it haunts the whole" (1991, 7). Throughout her book Campbell does not allow the reader to forget how much this specter haunted her while she was establishing a medieval and early modern genealogy of European representations of the non-European other (see Campbell 1991, 48, 86, 166, 266).

The third approach identifies (the texts of) Columbus and European conquest as the consequence of (the texts of) earlier Western encounters with the non-West. Authors such as Campbell (1991), Greenblatt (1991), or Mason (1990) try to contextualize the texts of the European conquest of the Americas by relating them to discourses about the other that circulated in medieval Europe. The authors focusing on colonial discourse are nearly exclusively concerned with the European side of first contact: natives feature only insofar as they are represented by strangers, and the conceptualization and critique of these representations are the thrust of this revisionist work.

It is dangerous to focus on European colonial discourses and, in particular, on European representations of non-European peoples: by avoiding or accidentally ignoring Native Americans or Pacific Islanders other than as objects of European gazes, we would ascribe an autonomy to European discourses and thus uphold one of the basic assumptions of the texts we set out to deconstruct. A critique of European colonial discourse must not be self-referential, but ought to take into account how European perceptions have been shaped both by what Europeans were conditioned to see and by what there was to be seen.⁹ An analysis that interpreted Columbus's fantasies about Carib cannibalism only in terms of ancient and medieval discourses on anthropophagy would again have written Caribs out of the history of early colonial contact in the Caribbean.

The European "texts" that have attracted the widest attention in recent years include Bartolomé de las Casas' edition of the logbook of Columbus's first voyage (Cohen 1969), woodcuts from a 1493 edition of Columbus's *First Letter* (reproduced, for example, in Greenblatt 1991, 100), illustrations from de Bry's *Great Voyages* (used liberally in Small and Jaffe

1991), and Jan van der Straet's engraving *America*, which is reproduced in nearly every recently published analysis of colonial discourse in early modern Europe.¹⁰ The logbook has obviously been edited heavily; the earliest illustration of Native Americans with "some claim to ethnographic accuracy" is probably a woodcut from 1505 that depicts Brazilian Indians (Sturtevant 1976, 420); de Bry's illustrations for his narration of the Spanish conquest of the Americas are not based on iconographic models or information brought back by one of its protagonists (Bucher 1981, 17); and van der Straet's engraving was made about a hundred years after the event. The links between the representations and what they represent are very loose, and thus a discussion of the latter could necessarily only feature in a distant sense in an analysis of the former. The selective interest of writers who aim at critiquing colonial discourse in early modern European representations of the New World begs the question, as Nicholas Thomas has reminded me, of why they have homed in on just a few images and texts and neglected a host of others. The focus on unambiguous, stark examples tries to suggest that Columbus, van der Straet, and their contemporaries were merely unconsciously enunciating a pervasive European frame of mind with regard to Native Americans. This suggestion serves to condemn the mind-set of early modern Europe by contrasting its collective imagination with the critical self-consciousness of those analyzing it. At the same time, this suggestion lets the protagonists of conquest off the hook by omitting the fact that alternative frames of mind were open to them.

The revisionist emphasis of authors such as Hulme and Mason who try to circumscribe and critique colonial discourse becomes more obvious when contrasted with that of historians of ideas such as Bitterli and Pagden. Bitterli has been interested in sketching the intellectual context both for discourses on the non-European other and for actual encounters between Europeans and non-Europeans (see, for example, Bitterli 1976; Bitterli 1989). A history of ideas is thus intertwined with a history of European expansion. For Bitterli the colonial encounter is what happened in Guanahani in 1492 and on other occasions when strangers and natives interacted. For Hulme, whose book *Colonial Encounters* (1986) is in my view the most successful revisionist attempt at rewriting first contact in the Americas, colonial encounters take place within European texts as much as in the Caribbean; in his revision Hulme situates the colonial encounter he analyses in Europe rather than in the Caribbean. Like

Hulme, Anthony Pagden is also not concerned with the Caribbean but with Europe (see Pagden 1982; Pagden 1993), but for him there is no doubt that those represented by Columbus and others were real. Pagden delineates the intellectual context within which Columbus' representations were made and thereby historicizes the texts of Columbus and others. Revisionist historians tend to contextualize these texts by relating them to other texts; they thereby establish a corpus that serves to exemplify colonial discourse. They seem intent on containing European approaches to Native Americans by identifying a discourse within which such approaches can be located. By containing European approaches to Native Americans they may attempt to contain European colonialism itself. As we are impatiently searching for what lies beyond (ie, "post") colonialism, these authors invite us first to recognize a genealogy of colonial discourse and then to distance ourselves from it by means of critiquing it. Pagden's history of ideas, in contrast, implies that we are bound up in the aftermath of colonial first contact: instead of attempting in vain to extricate ourselves from the colonial relationship, we can only strive to understand the complexities and ambiguities of European othering.¹¹

The preoccupation with European texts in analyses of colonial conquest, be they concerned with situating the ideological context of conquest historically (Pagden 1993), with identifying a Columbian discourse of conquest (Kadir 1992), or with relating Columbus' writings to earlier Western texts (Campbell 1988) or to subsequent layers of colonial discourse (Hulme 1986), is a response to a dilemma. Colonialism brought about the effacement of the other perspective. Revisionist histories of first contact in the Caribbean need to circumnavigate an absence. There is no Taino account that could balance the European texts. As if the silence created by the extermination of Tainos in the wake of first contact hindered the commencement of their revisionist projects (which draw foremostly on Columbus' account of first contact), two authors preface their texts with an inversion of Columbus' account, an imagined Taino view of first contact:¹² it could indeed be argued that events and characters in histories of first contact in 1492 are fictitious so long as these histories are distilled exclusively from European written sources and not complemented by fiction. Yet any fictional account of first contact in 1492 is intricately bound up with the texts produced by Columbus and Bartolomé de las Casas, his editor. However much we try to discard the colonial past or counter the history made by colonialism, we cannot embark on a new

(*post-colonial*) relationship without being haunted by the old (colonial) relationship. When writing about first contact in the Caribbean, it seems impossible to dissociate the postcolonial present from the colonial past.

WRITING FIRST CONTACT IN THE PACIFIC ISLANDS

Pacific Island historians have all but abandoned the fatal impact approach, in vogue in the 1960s and 1970s, that was epitomized by Alan Moorehead's classic *The Fatal Impact* (1966).¹³ The first of the three trends, so fashionable in rewriting the history of first contact in 1492, is of little relevance for writing the histories of the now formally independent Pacific Island nation-states. These days, Papua New Guineans, for example, do not appear overtly interested in being told about the horrors of colonialism, as such accounts potentially belittle today's descendants of yesterday's victims. Neither are most European historians interested in telling them about the fatality of the early contact period, as they pride themselves on being sensitive to the needs and expectations of the descendants of the people they are writing about.

Papua New Guinean histories written around 1975 that emphasized native agency could be read as declarations of support for those Papua New Guineans who led the country to independence. Today, Papua New Guineans assert their country's political independence with pride and confidence. Eighteen years after independence, the days of European villains and Papua New Guinean victims seem irrevocable. The perceived antagonism between colonizer and colonized has given way to new antagonisms: for example, between men and women, or between Western-educated indigenous elites who collaborate with overseas interests, and between subsistence and smallholder cash-crop farmers. Therefore it does not come as a surprise that historians have become increasingly wary about ascribing an undue degree of agency to "the colonized" in the past and now stress the internal contradictions of Papua New Guinean societies during the colonial era.

Pacific Island historians have been preoccupied with finding the right balance with regard to indigenous agency. Often they have been in the fortunate position to cooperate with Pacific Islanders in ascertaining their points of view. Maybe for these reasons they have been less prominently concerned with European colonial discourse than historians of colonialism elsewhere. Or maybe some of them have come to believe that the

assumed insularity of the societies they are concerned with allows them to treat the European actors as somehow isolated from colonial discourse. Priding themselves on the sympathetic treatment of Pacific Islanders as historical actors that was part and parcel of the dominant island-centered school of Pacific Island history, they did not investigate whether their own texts have constituted or contributed to colonial discourse.

For historians constructing the colonial past of a settler colony, however, the third option, the critique of European representations, has often suggested itself as the only alternative for a postcolonial investigation of colonial history. This option is the only one that could turn our attention back to ourselves. Whereas histories that highlight fatal impacts and legacies of conquest project our present interests onto earlier generations, holding them firmly responsible, the second option allows us to use the other's past as a means of diverting attention from our own. Only the third option is truly self-critical, at least potentially, as it is concerned in the final instance with our own practices. The text with which I began this article, Lauterbach's account of a first-contact situation in northeastern New Guinea in 1890, would lend itself to showing that little can be deduced from the European account about what really took place on a certain hilltop in 1890, whereas much could be gained from a critique of European colonial discourse as it is reflected in this text. Lauterbach's account makes a mockery of the conventional connotations of the term *first contact* and illustrates how European "exploration" is supported by a language of invasion. However, today such a critique seems hardly warranted in a history of colonial Papua New Guinea. Historians of Papua New Guinea are busily writing the histories of Papua New Guineans (and, occasionally, of Europeans who lived in Papua New Guinea). For such histories, Lauterbach and his text would matter less than the Papua New Guineans who guided him down to the Gogol River and out of their lives.

TWO WORLDS IN AOTEAROA

Let me once again return to the writing of first contact in a settler colony. Anne Salmond's widely acclaimed book *Two Worlds* (1991) on first contact in Aotearoa (New Zealand) would not fit into either of the three categories of first contact revisionism that I sketched above. Salmond describes incidents of first contact between Europeans and Maori in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. She discusses four European expedi-

tions (one Dutch, one British, and two French) and the encounters between Maori and the men of these ships: the *Zeehaen* and the *Heemskerck*, under Abel Tasman, anchoring in Taitapu (Golden Bay) in the north of the South Island in 1642; the *Endeavour*, under James Cook, circumnavigating first the North and then the South Island in 1769–1770; the *St Jean Baptiste*, under Jean-François-Marie de Surville, visiting the northwestern tip of the North Island in 1769; and the *Mascarin* and the *Marquis de Castries*, under Marc-Joseph Marion du Fresne, calling at the Bay of Islands on the northeast coast of the North Island in 1772.

Very detailed chronological accounts of the various encounters between strangers and natives, based primarily on the journals kept by some of the strangers, form the main body of Salmond's book. They are complemented by an equally detailed listing of the information collected about Aotearoa and its inhabitants and written down by Europeans on board these European ships, by reconstructions of the political situation in the areas visited by the four expeditions, and by brief descriptions of precontact Maori, Dutch, British, and French societies.

Prefacing her account of English society in the mid-seventeenth century, Salmond says: "[T]he *Endeavour* party . . . mirrored the society from which they came, not only in their accounts but in their reactions to the local people, their social rankings, their routines, their food, their clothing, their guns, their ship, their intentions and their very presence in a South Pacific bay. Cook's expedition was a side-show of Georgian England, touring the New Zealand coastline, and to grasp its purposes and practices it is to that society that we must briefly turn" (89; see also 299). By no means wishing to detract from the value of Salmond's admirable reconstruction of encounters between Europeans and Maori, it is to these descriptions of Europe that I would like to turn to grasp the purposes and practices of Salmond's text.

Salmond describes the living conditions in seventeenth and eighteenth century Europe and the hierarchical organization of European society. She stresses the number of Europeans living in poverty and seems particularly fascinated by the punishments meted out to those offending European laws.¹⁴ I find the inclusion in her book of rather sketchy portrayals of European societies in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries intriguing—the more so because they do not emphasize the aspects that are immediately relevant for explaining the actions of those on board the Dutch, British, and French ships in their encounters with Maori. I shall

illustrate my point by discussing her treatment of the background to Cook's first voyage:

Salmond's account of British society in the second half of the eighteenth century (88–94) is not very specific, although she admits that the crew of the *Endeavour* were far from typical inhabitants of Britain: "Unlike most of their British compatriots, they were cosmopolitan and widely travelled, familiar with sea ports as well as their own home towns and villages, and a number of them had visited the Pacific before" (107). She does not, however, say how the past experiences of these British sailors influenced their behavior vis-à-vis the Maori they encountered.

Neither does she say much about the society from which one of the key players in those encounters came: Tupaia, a Raiatean priest, had joined the *Endeavour* in July 1769 in Tahiti. He and his "boy" Tayeto were initially the only people on board who could communicate verbally with Maori (252). No doubt the encounters between Europeans and Maori, and the information collected by Banks, Solander, and others were shaped by Tupaia's mediation (see 293).

Where the nature of Cook's expedition as a "side-show of Georgian England" matters perhaps most, in the ethnographic accounts written by members of the *Endeavour* party, Salmond refrains from deconstructing the European gaze and instead discusses the European depictions of the land, the people, and their culture in curious terms: accounts are "meticulous" (264, 294), drawings "marvellous" (264), charts and sketches "extremely accurate" (294), descriptions "superb" (294). Even though she is aware that "the observers' unconscious reflections of their own lives shaped their reflections upon others" (295), she does not say *how* they did. Instead she recounts at great length the ethnographic detail recorded by the Europeans (267–294), often quoting verbatim, and she reproduces two vocabularies collected by Banks and Parkinson (291–293).

Why then does she include general descriptions of European societies? Anne Salmond wants her book to be "an experimental essay in constructing an adequate scholarship of the beginnings of New Zealand's shared history" (432). Incidents of first contact in 1642, 1769–1770, and 1772 mark these beginnings: "In these first meetings, shiploads of sailors and scientists from different parts of Europe (or its colonial outposts) came together with the inheritors of another sea-borne tradition, which in its way was as restless and turbulent.^[15] Once Europeans and the people of various Maori communities met, a process of negotiation and exchange

began that continues to this day" (431). Salmond produces the first chapter of a national history of New Zealand. Her account is a comprehensive drawing together of New Zealand's origins: she includes profiles of pre-contact Maori society and precontact European society, complete with both a Maori cosmological chant about the origins of the world (39–40) and the European equivalent, the opening verses of Genesis (52–55).¹⁶ New Zealand society emerges in consequence of a meeting of two worlds, one Maori and one European, in a process of negotiation and exchange between these two worlds. Neither of them was superior (and to drive home this point Salmond emphasizes poverty and cruel punishments in precontact Europe). Cook, Marion du Fresne, and others are cited as representatives of a European world (and the fact that they and their crews are rather exceptional would only get in the way of the broader picture and is therefore not stressed). The Raiatean, Tupaia, rather than presented as the representative of a "third world," which would have upset the assumed dichotomy of colonialism, is incorporated into "Europe."¹⁷

Like other historians of first contact, Salmond faces the problem that her main sources are contemporary European texts.¹⁸ In *Two Worlds*, she lets Maori respond to European actions by deciding on their behalf what they would have (or must have) done.¹⁹ Making conjectures to fill gaps is legitimate and common historical practice. For historians of colonial encounters, however, there is no neutral ground from which to speak: Salmond's mediations of Maori agency cannot be divorced from the unequal relationship between Maori and Pakeha that began "once Europeans and the people of Maori communities met" and "continues to this day."²⁰

Offering an all-inclusive, two-pronged prehistory of New Zealand, Salmond claims to be equally distant from both worlds and describes the meetings of two groups of people very unlike herself. She matches an explanation of native culture and actions through the eyes of strangers with an analogous explanation of the strangers' culture and actions. She creates a Brechtian alienation effect by anthropologizing the European past, a method she calls "mirror-image ethnography" (15). She describes both worlds from an outsider's point of view (or rather, from the perspective usually reserved for depictions of indigenous cultures by Europeans).²¹ Without problematizing the anthropologization of Maori culture, she offers a (rather superficial) anthropologization of European culture, as if her inversion of the strangers' gaze could serve as a substitute for a

Maori view of Pakeha culture. By distancing herself from her European cultural background, Salmond effectively claims to speak from the point of view of both Maori and Pakeha New Zealanders.

The shared future Salmond envisages is based on two acknowledgments: of cultural diversity in the present (432) and of a diachronic cultural discontinuity. Taken together, they provide the detached space for her to write the foundations of a national history of New Zealand that claims to privilege neither European nor Maori perspectives.²² I read her book as an attempt to appropriate a Maori speaking position for a national history of New Zealand.

ANTITHETICAL POSSIBILITIES IN AUSTRALIA

The fifth variety of first-contact history that I want to discuss briefly is in my view the most interesting one. In his work on early colonial encounters in Australia and the Caribbean, the Australian historian Paul Carter tries to emancipate the first-contact past from what has come after it. He tries to restore a utopian potential to that past. “[R]evisionist historians have painted themselves into a dark corner,” Carter claims. “If nothing from the events of first contact can be redeemed, what cultural genealogy will our historians invoke to explain their own ambiguity? But this may be their blind spot: to fail to recognize that first contact is not simply a preliminary to invasion and massacre but contains within it antithetical possibilities” (Carter 1992*c*, 14). Carter has no illusions about the precarious and flimsy nature of these antithetical possibilities—they are already corrupted by the context that contains them: “Even the most idealised first contact between Europeans and indigenes never resembled an innocent dance of unattached syllables. . . . The courtesies of first contact were nothing if not a form of coercion” (Carter 1992*c*, 13; see also 41). Yet the babble that is generated by strangers and natives in their first encounters signifies a desire for dialogue. In his sound installations and experimental radio plays, Carter tries to amplify the babble (see Carter 1991; 1992*c*). He attempts to highlight in-between spaces and sounds. The scripted sounds of his collages, he hopes, “might mimic a history still to foreclose on the future” (Carter 1992*c*, 171).

Carter tries to invoke the fleeting moments of first-contact situations that hinted at another future. Historians have tended to overlook these moments: “they relegate them to anecdotal status, implying that, because

they did not lead to any lasting result, they lie outside the mainstream of history" (Carter 1992*b*, 164). Taking a cue from Walter Benjamin's writings, I have elsewhere called these moments and texts that re-create them "trash of history" (Neumann 1992*a*). The trash of history cannot be used to support the notion that the past leads inevitably to the present or that the present could be fully deduced from the past. The trash of history is the supposedly irrelevant, insignificant, marginal past that could lend itself to be the stuff from which alternative histories are imagined and from which alternative history is made. Like Salmond's history, Carter's trash, the unfinished, hardly begun cultural exchanges at the moment of first contact hint at a future society that indigenes and settlers, the descendants of natives and strangers, would be able to share. Carter's trash sketches the potential foundations of a creole society (see Carter 1992*b*, 146).

Carter's line might be taken further. We might want to rescue some of the initial reactions of strangers and natives from being scripted into a history that inevitably leads to the present. We could highlight the ambiguity of the European sense of wonder that Stephen Greenblatt has discussed so eloquently in his analysis of the first encounters between Europeans and Native Americans (Greenblatt 1991) or stress the potential openness to the other in the explorer's curious gaze.²³ But it would not simply be a new insight based on new research that compelled us to venture even farther than Carter.

IN ORDER TO WIN THEIR FRIENDSHIP

"In order to win their friendship," Christopher Columbus "gave some of them red caps and glass beads" (Cohen 1967, 55), Carl Lauterbach "slipped a few beads into their hands" (Lauterbach 1891, 49–50), and James Cook "threw them some nails beads &c^a a shore" (Beaglehole 1955, 305). In order to win *their* friendship *we* rewrite the histories of the giving, slipping, and throwing of beads. Are not all attempts to revise the histories that condoned European colonialism directed at winning their (that is, Pacific Islanders' or Australian Aborigines' or Native Americans') friendship? Aren't they all aimed at leaving the colonial relationship behind, at getting past the post that signifies its end? Are we perhaps merely trying to write away colonialism in our clumsy attempts to write postcolonial histories?

Compared with recent indigenous attempts at rewriting or in some

other forms remaking early colonial history, European revisions of the histories of first-contact situations in settler colonies seem clumsy indeed. I believe it is more important now to read or listen closely to Aboriginal histories, by Hobbles Danayarri or Paddy Wainburranga, for example, of Captain Cook's coming to Australia,²⁴ than to fashion European anticolonial histories of this particular instance of first contact.

Paul Carter's project is visionary and daring. It sketches the possibilities of a distinctively European contribution to rewriting colonial history. It tries to foreshadow and advance a *postcolonial* relationship by offering a postcolonial interpretation of its historical beginnings. What makes it problematic is its willful ignoring of the essentially colonial and hence unequal nature of today's relationship between settlers and indigenes in Australia. Considering the colonial makeup of Australia's postcolonial present, a postcolonial history that successfully incorporated Aboriginal history (in the sense of histories of Aborigines) would come perilously close to contesting Aboriginal histories (in the sense of histories told and made by Aborigines). However problematic the assertion that Aboriginal history must only be written by Aborigines, it pinpoints the danger that Aboriginal (subordinate) histories are easily appropriated for non-Aboriginal (dominant) history once they are wrested from the control of their Aboriginal authors.

In the last chapter of his earlier book *The Road to Botany Bay*, Carter grapples with the problem that "we have no grounds for presuming that aboriginal history can be treated as a subset of white history, as a history within history" (Carter 1987, 325). He proposes an "aboriginal history of space": "Rather than seek by a newly ingenious means to translate the otherness of their experience into empirical terms, it might take the form of a meditation on the absent other of our own history. . . . A history of space which revealed the everyday world in which we live as the continuous intentional re-enactment of our spatial history might say not a word about 'The Aborigines'. But, by recovering the intentional nature of our grasp on the world, it might evoke their historical experience without appropriating it to white ends" (Carter 1987, 350). For good reason, Carter ends on a nonassertive note. European postcolonial histories of first contact in settler societies need to acknowledge the precariousness of their undertaking. They need to acknowledge that the feasibility of their projects will depend on the extent to which and the way in which indigenous people make and rewrite histories. They need to acknowledge their own

status as European contributions to rather than as creole solutions for the rewriting of history. I may seem to be asking for a lot of uncertainty, but I think European postcolonial histories can take heart from Aboriginal contributions. "Black stories from the Victoria River offer a challenge which is not a wild dream," Deborah Rose says at the end of her powerful and empowering book of Aboriginal histories (Rose 1991, 266). Listening to Aboriginal histories and taking up that challenge will not of itself get us past the "post," but we will not get anywhere near it if we decline the challenge and remain preoccupied with rewriting *our* histories. It is not simply a matter of listening, however. We need to make room. One way of doing that is to deconstruct what Carter calls "foundational" history. Yet such a deconstruction needs to be complemented by our admission that the space we clear for our postcolonial histories may be invaded by Aboriginal voices beyond our control.

And what about first-contact histories in the Pacific Islands? Here the writing of first-contact history has been very much a European preoccupation. This observation seems to hold even for comparatively recent incidents of first contact in the highlands of Papua New Guinea. Schieffelin and Crittenden, who edited a collection of articles that deal with first contact between Papua New Guinean Highlanders and members of the 1935 Strickland-Purari patrol, claim that "stories of the first encounters between Europeans and the indigenous peoples of Papua New Guinea have always had a particular fascination for both Europeans and Papua New Guineans alike" (Schieffelin and Crittenden 1991, 3) but have to admit that "stories of the [Strickland-Purari] patrol were not often told by the people amongst themselves and were not particularly well known to the younger generation" (9). People in the places I know best in Papua New Guinea, the area around Finschhafen and the northeastern Gazelle Peninsula, certainly do not tell first-contact histories—except for stories relating the coming of missionaries (see Neumann 1992*b*, chapter 5).

European anthropologists and historians have been preoccupied with first-contact situations in Papua New Guinea because they made assumptions about the significance of these situations for Papua New Guineans²⁵—and supposedly not because they thereby acknowledged the significance of first contact for the Europeans involved or for themselves. This European preoccupation with events that assumedly had (or ought to have) preoccupied Papua New Guineans is related to the European fascination with Papua New Guineans marveling at Europeans and at aspects of their

material culture, which is captured in the film *First Contact* (Connolly and Anderson 1983), where the filmmakers invite their audiences to join them in marveling uninhibitedly at Highlanders marveling at a phonograph (see also Taussig 1993, 198–208).

Unlike the histories of settler colonies, the histories of those Pacific Islands that are now formally independent have for a long time avoided celebratory depictions of first contact.²⁶ There has been no need for a European hero stepping ashore in, say, Papua New Guinean or ni-Vanuatu history. It must have been largely the fascination of us Pacific Island historians with Europeans supposedly contacting non-European peoples that made us write about first contact and elicit native accounts of strangers stepping ashore. As those strangers we write about, we have perhaps preferred not to hear or heed the natives' request, "*Marik!*" "Get lost!" In the end, our attempts to win their friendship may not be any more successful than those of Captain Cook's Mr Hicks, who one day after first contact in Botany Bay "did all in his power to entice them to him by offering them presents &c" but it was to no purpose, all they seemed to want was for us to be gone" (Beaglehole 1955, 306).

SPACES BETWEEN

European historians writing histories of colonial encounters are looking for a speaking position, they are looking for a space to write in. It is no mere coincidence that Paul Carter is intrigued by the voices in-between. "In the first contact situation," he says, "for a time at least, tentative efforts are made on both sides to initiate a dialogue across difference, to break out of the enclosure of the mirror and to institute an in-between state where language is able to recover its ability to communicate gesturally and not diacritically" (Carter 1992c, 80).

Postcolonial history needs to break out of the enclosure of the mirror and get beyond matching the colonial past with an anticolonial history. The search for the in-between in the colonial past is indicative of a yearning for an in-between in the postcolonial present.²⁷ Greg Denning "would like an epitaph on [his] grave that would read: '*Hape*, Upside-Down. In-Between. He did what he could.'" (Denning 1988, 97–98). I think on a superficial level he is referring here to the in-between status of the historian turned anthropologist turned historian. But he may also have in mind a space in between colonizer and colonized, native and stranger. In his

books Dening reserves his most empathetic portraits for the strangers in between, for the beachcombers in *Islands and Beaches* (Dening 1980, 129–156) and for Peter Heywood in *Mr Bligh's Bad Language* (Dening 1992, 257–262). For some of us, our search for a space to write, a position to write from leads us to particular subject matters, beaches and clearings prominently among them. Depending on the nature of the yearning for an in-between space, I would be either deeply suspicious of or attracted to the metaphor of the beach. I am troubled by the idea of having an empty beach, a space carved out of history, a space that has not been written yet and that awaits my writing it. I am enthralled by the idea of having a beach littered with flotsam and jetsam, a beach with incompatible sounds and voices floating and intermingling and intersecting, a beach that may at any time be reclaimed by the sea.

Not only do our yearnings lead us to write about certain subject matter. When thinking of an in-between space to write from I am also dreaming of an in-between space to write about. "I think history is more likely to be born on beaches, marginal spaces in between land and sea. Anyway this is where I would take you, to beaches where everything is relativised a little, turned around, where tradition is as much invented as handed down, where otherness is both a new discovery and a reflection of something old" (Dening 1992, 177). I, too, want my histories to be born in marginal spaces. But beaches are not only invaded by the incoming tide, they are also invaded by amphibious landing craft. Not infrequently the histories born in marginal spaces are obliterated by the History that sweeps across these spaces.

When speaking and writing from and about in-between spaces we need to be constantly on our guard. We need to be aware of the precariousness of these spaces. And our writings should reflect and perhaps consciously play with the volatility of our position.

THE DREADED POLITICS OF HISTORICAL REPRESENTATION

Paula Brown in a recent article criticizes the notion that there could be one history of first contact between Chimbu and stranger (Brown 1992). Different groups of Chimbu and different groups of strangers have different narratives and interpretations of past events, she argues. Has not her advocacy of a history that offers an array of different perspectives more to do with today's postcolonial relations between Chimbu and stranger, and

conflicts between different sections of Chimbu society, than with the nature of contact between Chimbu and stranger some sixty years ago?

In this article I have tried to argue that it is impossible to identify a formula for writing first-contact history that fits the Pacific Islands, New Zealand, Australia, and the Americas, however many congruities there may be between incidents of first contact in those places. Whether Paul Carter's or Anne Salmond's approach is useful for attempting to come to grips with first contact in the New Guinea Highlands is no matter of a simple comparison between two different methodologies, two different understandings of what history is, or different subject matters. It is also a matter of what is or seems to be politically appropriate in the context of the New Zealand, Australian, or Papua New Guinean postcolonial present. When writing about colonialism in, for instance, Papua New Guinea, a European historian cannot aim at locating the foundations of a creole society in the past or at doing the groundwork for a shared future by rewriting first-contact history.

The politics of historical representation are too often perceived as a potential impediment to writing and thereby coping with the colonial past. Who has not wished the walls of the academic ivory tower to be sufficiently high to protect her or him from an intrusion of present concerns upon the representation of the past?²⁸ Yet anybody writing about colonial pasts these days would have found that those walls do not offer much protection. Nor should they. The only strategy I can think of is constantly to address the politics of historical representation in and through my work. All of us who are writing histories of colonized and colonizers are reacting to demands and taking sides. Historians always contribute to fashioning images of the past in the present. Those of us who advocate multivocality are still constructing one history out of many narratives and, as Bronwen Douglas has pointed out to me, need to explore the politics of historical representation of the narratives on which they draw as well as the politics of making histories by citing, juxtaposing, or intersecting these narratives. I would like to see more histories whose authors are self-consciously reflecting on the past in the present, on the kind of historical consciousness their work represents and addresses and takes issue with, and on their own production of history. Maybe we could thereby avoid having phony debates on methodology and the accuracy of our representations of what really happened in the past.

Having begun this article with lengthy reservations, I want to conclude

by trying to put my reflections on first-contact historiography into perspective. The politics of historical representation are also subject to the political economics of academic knowledge production. A subject such as first contact is also a contested object. Different disciplines compete for it by strategically launching or promoting new discourses. The novelty of a particular argument needs also to be interpreted in the light of a longing for tenure, an application for a grant, or a publisher's brief. When discussing revisionist historiography we must never forget the relations of knowledge production within which such revisions were generated, and accordingly we need to be aware of the entanglement of our own critiques of an entangled historiography.

While emphasizing the need for a self-conscious reflection of the past in the present, I have refrained from sketching an analysis of first contact and its various representations that transcends the limits of a critique and anticipates a postcolonial historical practice.²⁹

On these two accounts, my reflection is a limited, unambitious, and preliminary investigation of issues to do with historical representations of first contact. However, I believe that such preliminaries are warranted so long as we have not rid ourselves of the myths of a historiographical practice that pretends that history is merely an account of the past and that past and present do not and must not intrude upon each other, or as we continue to exempt our own practices and politics from the critical scrutiny we apply liberally to the past and its texts.

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Notes

1 When I use the term *Pacific Island historians*, I am referring to academic historians whose research, teaching, and writings focus on people in and from the Pacific Islands.

2 Gerald Sider (1987) offers some instructive illustrations of this point in his lucid analysis of the contradictions of colonial domination.

3 The tenacity of such histories would deserve a separate paper, for the rhetorical strategies with which somebody like Felipe Fernandez-Armesto, to name but one of today's most prominent eulogists of European conquest in the Americas, revitalizes the thrust of Morison's now anachronistic work (Morison 1942) are truly fascinating (see Fernandez-Armesto 1992a, 1992b). Interestingly, recent celebratory histories all seem to focus on the life of the alleged discoverer of the Americas, Christopher Columbus. By the same token, sympathetic biographies (such as David Thomas 1991), even those more moderate in their reverence of "Columbus, the man," than Morison's or Fernandez-Armesto's, tend to approve of the beginnings of European colonialism. This attitude was particularly evident in what was perhaps the most widely consumed quincennial Columbus portrait, Gerard Depardieu's impersonation of a heroically tragic Admiral of the Ocean Seas (Scott 1992).

4 I am not striving for a comprehensive overview of revisionist first-contact historiography. Rather, I am shamelessly constructing these three trends to suit my own purposes. Neither am I taking into account the whole variety of approaches to first contact in Pacific Island history; I refer those of you who register such an omission with disappointment to Nicholas Thomas (1990).

5 Koning (1991, 115–116). Toward the end of his book on Columbus, Sale draws his readers' attention to the extent of deforestation and topsoil depletion projected for 1992 (1991, 363–364). Koning and Sale are typical representatives of this particular revisionist trend and probably two of the most widely read. In their 1492: *What Is It Like to Be Discovered?* Small and Jaffe (1991) juxtapose the Spanish conquest (the past) with the American New World Order (the present) and effectively expose colonialist rhetoric and imagery; again, General Westmoreland makes an appearance. Koning had traced the "bloody trail of conquest" to General Westmoreland first in 1976; also long before the revisionist rush of the quincennial, Richard Drinnon had drawn a line from the first European settlers in North America (and their attitudes to and interactions with Native Americans) to the infamous general in his *Facing West* (1980).

6 The push for a recognition in Australian historiography of the extent of the European violence against Aborigines in the greater part of White Australia's history was most pronounced in the 1970s and early 1980s. More recently, studies that have emphasized the active role of Aborigines in the first phases of coloniza-

tion, in cooperating with or challenging the Europeans, have been more prominent. Books detailing instances of horrific, if not fatal, impact, however, are still being published and widely reviewed in the press. Interestingly, most of them are written by historians with little affiliation to the academic discipline; two of these (Elder 1988; Milliss 1992) are on a list of five books on Aboriginal history that are recommended by the federal agency ATSIC (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission) as part of a public awareness campaign on the occasion of the International Year for the World's Indigenous People.

7 In Australia, the question whether and to what degree non-Aboriginal Australians need to acknowledge the wrongs of conquest has been a matter of much public debate in recent years. In December 1992 this debate was fueled by the Australian prime minister's speech to launch the International Year for the World's Indigenous People, in which he said: "The starting point might be to recognize that the problem starts with us non-Aboriginal Australians. It *begins*, I think, with that act of recognition. Recognition that it was we who did the dispossessing. *We* took the traditional lands and smashed the traditional way of life. *We* brought the diseases. The alcohol. *We* committed the murders. *We* took the children from their mothers. *We* practised discrimination and exclusion. It was *our* ignorance and *our* prejudice. And *our* failure to imagine these things being done to us" (Keating 1992, 3). This statement seems to have been fashioned after a passage in the conclusion of Bruce Elder's widely read book on massacres in Australian history (Elder 1988, 200).

8 For a good example of this tendency, see Stevenson (1992). Revisionist histories of this first variety draw on evidence put forward and images fashioned as part of the Black Legend (see Taussig 1992, 37–38). In fact, many of these histories are perpetuations or extensions of the Black Legend; their rejection of the language of colonialism functions as the main, if not the only, marker that sets them off from colonial critiques of the "excessive" violence of colonialism (for a recent example of such a critique that remains indebted to the colonial rhetoric, see Varner and Varner 1983).

9 This charge could be leveled against Mason's *Deconstructing America* (1990), for instance, even though he tries to combine a critique of colonial discourse with an analysis of Native American conceptualizations of the other. According to Mason, the European collective imagination (which was responsible for locating Plinian races in the Americas) was matched by Native American myths of monstrous races—but he still interprets the making of the European myths as a strictly European affair that can be isolated from actual contact between Europeans and Native Americans. In *Deconstructing America*, the reality of the colonial encounter is deconstructed to the point where it is no longer visible.

10 *America* is reproduced in Certeau (1988), Hulme (1986), Mason (1990),

Montrose (1991), and others. It has become a signifier for a peculiar discourse: the late-twentieth-century European critique of early modern European colonial discourse.

11 Pagden's *European Encounters with the New World* (1993) is no less a critique of European colonialism than Hulme's *Colonial Encounters* (1986). The author of another history of ideas that rides the quincentennial tide, Valerie Flint (1992), is meticulous in her delineation of Columbus's intellectual background but approaches first contact from the point of view of a biographer of the man she frequently refers to as "the great admiral." She is interested in Columbus because of his "achievements," not because he epitomizes or triggered colonial conquest.

12 Peter Hulme (1986, 13) used a text by Gabriel Garcia Marquez (1977, 35–36) from *The Autumn of the Patriarch*; the Caribbean writer Jan Carew created her own (Carew 1988, 1–2). See also Abel Posse's novel *The Dogs of Paradise*, a secret history of conquest that subverts the banality of histories based on "unadorned facts" ("history records only the grandiloquent, the visible, acts whose results are cathedrals and processions, that is why history composed for official consumption is so banal" [Posse 1990, 73]).

13 For a critical history of Pacific Island history, see Nicholas Thomas (1990). The debate about the fatality of colonial impact has been most pronounced in relation to the historical analysis of the Queensland labor trade. One of the participants in that debate, Clive Moore, has recently surveyed the relevant historiography (Moore 1992a; 1992b). I agree with Thomas (1990, 152) when he suggests that we need an analysis of the depiction of Islanders as victims in Pacific Island history; however, such an analysis is not the purpose of this article.

14 The issue of crime and punishment in Europe crops up four times in Salmond's book (49–50, 65, 90, 302). Out of the fifteen illustrations depicting life in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe, four show various forms of capital punishment (50, 51, 91, 304). The flogging of a sailor on board a British ship is the subject of another (109).

15 Salmond's refutation of claims that precontact Maori society was static is one of the strengths of her book.

16 Her construction of "Europe" (45–60) is here no less problematic than the construction of one precontact Maori culture (24–44).

17 Ironically, in order to fashion a national history of New Zealand it might actually prove advantageous to pay more attention to Tupaia's world, to make him represent the large proportion of Polynesian migrants in today's population of Aotearoa.

18 Salmond claims to represent both European and Maori perspectives, but her analyses of first-contact situations demonstrate the relative scarcity of Maori accounts and rely primarily on the journals kept by some of the Europeans involved. She points out that "the European visits were of marginal interest to

tribal historians, since the European protagonists were external to the local genealogical networks that provide the key principle for ordering tribal historical accounts" (436; see also 431–432).

19 For instance, when talking about Tasman's visit in 1642, Salmond suggests: "No doubt Ngaati Tumatakokiri at the time of Tasman's visit lived in small villages. . . . We can be sure that there had been meetings and debates all of that day. . . . The crews of the canoes . . . must have included some of the courageous toa (warriors). . . . It is possible they had decided these were spirits. . . . The warriors must have been mystified" (78, *emphases mine*).

20 A related approach was taken in a recently published history of Tasmanian Aborigines in the nineteenth century, Cassandra Pybus's *Community of Thieves* (1991). Pybus is yearning to convey the Aboriginal side of white-black relations in Tasmania but has to acknowledge that it is impossible for her to reconstruct the motives of Aboriginal historical actors. She seems to want more than just to empathize with the colonized. Her desire to identify with them could instigate the elimination of the difference that protects the colonized from the appropriating gaze. Unintelligibility can serve as a last protective mantle that thwarts attempts to integrate the colonized into the colonizers' discourses. Unintelligibility leaves open the possibility of incommensurability: the colonized may in fact have their own terms, their own rationale, that resist the colonizers' rationalizations and cannot be translated. In *Community of Thieves*, Pybus puts forward her claim for a Tasmanian heritage. She is not just a historian interested in reading the minds and reconstructing the emotions of nineteenth-century Tasmanian Aborigines, but someone desiring to be their legitimate heir.

21 This procedure is intriguingly reminiscent of widely read critical portrayals of metropolitan European societies that were falsely attributed to non-European inhabitants of newly "discovered" or newly conquered places: the Tahitian Omai, for example, supposedly wrote *An Historic Epistle . . . to the Queen of Otaheite; being his Remarks on the English Nation*, which was published in 1775 in London (see Smith 1989, 83–84); an African ambassador, Lukanga Mukara, allegedly depicted German imperial society around the turn of the century (Paasche 1988).

22 By using many Maori terms in her text without italicizing them, Salmond stresses the notion of a shared New Zealand history that supersedes Maori and European histories.

23 Nicholas Thomas has explored the ambiguities of curiosity in the accounts of colonial travelers (Thomas 1991a; Thomas 1991b, 126–144).

24 See Rose (1984) for Danayarri's history, Mackinolty and Wainburranga (1988) for a transcription of Wainburranga's oral account, and Murphy (1992, 17) for a reproduction of Wainburranga's 1987 bark painting *Too Many Captain Cooks*. Chris Healy has written an instructive article on the discussion about the historicity of Aboriginal histories of the coming of Captain Cook (Healy 1990).

25 Marilyn Strathern convincingly refutes some of those assumptions (1990, 29–33).

26 The cases of Guam, Hawai'i, New Caledonia, and other colonies with relatively large nonindigenous populations differ markedly from those of the now formally independent Pacific Islands, without being settler colonies of the same nature as Australia or the United States mainland. The discussion of these differences would require another paper.

27 Judging by a fascinating keynote address I heard her give at the ninth David Nichol Smith Seminar on 26 August 1993 at the University of Auckland, Anne Salmond, too, has recently been intrigued by in-between spaces and people who crossed boundaries. (Her address was titled "Borderlands: Playing with the Past.")

28 We (ie, European historians writing histories of non-European people and places) tend to be terrified of problems of the kind Roger Keesing and Jocelyn Linnekin have experienced in Hawai'i (see Trask 1991; Keesing 1991; and Linnekin 1991).

29 Michael Taussig's dazzling and unsettling exploration of mimesis (Taussig 1993), which includes an investigation of first contact, proves that a radical critique can go a long way toward replacing its subject with a new practice. Because of the particular scope of my article (renegotiations of colonial first contact in the Caribbean, Australia, and New Zealand), I have refrained from discussing his project.

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Abstract

This article discusses five different approaches to writing first contact. Numerous rereadings of the history of early colonial encounters in the Americas have been published in anticipation or in the wake of the Columbus quincentenary; three different varieties of quincentennial revisionism are identified and contextualized: the authors discussed either emphasize the fatality of colonial impact, stress indig-

enous agency and privilege indigenous perspectives, or focus on European colonial discourse. The article also looks at recent writings of Anne Salmond and Paul Carter on first contact. It investigates the relevance of these rewritings of first contact for Pacific Island historians. It argues for a heightened sense of self-awareness about the politics of historical representation.